WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1-27. (Cancelled)

28. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying thereon a workpiece; and

a supporting mechanism having a magnet, for supporting a weight of said carrying member;

wherein a force to be applied to said magnet does not change with a shift of said carrying member along a plane perpendicular to a direction in which the weight is supported.

29. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying thereon a workpiece; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member, said supporting mechanism having an element for producing a force to increase/decrease a shift in a supporting direction, wherein, as the shift in the supporting direction increases, said carrying member is moved downwardly.

30. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a first element for producing a resisting force to a shift in a supporting direction, and a second element for producing a force to increase a shift in the supporting direction.

31. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element;

wherein, adjacent the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of said spring element and said magnet element are approximately equal to each other, and wherein said magnet element has a magnet with a clearance which is smaller at the transfer position than at the workpiece processing position.

32. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element;

wherein, adjacent the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a combined force of said spring element and said magnet element are approximately equal to each other, and wherein said magnet element has a magnet with a clearance which is larger at the transfer position than at the workpiece processing position.

33. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element;

wherein an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said magnet element with respect to a change in clearance of the magnet, adjacent the workpiece processing position, is set smaller than an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said spring element with respect to a change in the clearance of the magnet.

34. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position, said supporting mechanism having a spring element and a magnet element;

wherein an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said magnet element with respect to a change in clearance of the magnet, adjacent the workpiece processing position, is set larger than an absolute value of a changing rate of the force of said spring element with respect to a change in the clearance of the magnet.

35. (Original) An exposure apparatus, comprising:

a carrying member for carrying a workpiece thereon; and

a supporting mechanism for supporting said carrying member from a workpiece transfer position to a workpiece processing position;

wherein, adjacent the transfer position, the weight of said carrying member and a force to be applied to said carrying member are substantially balanced, and wherein, adjacent the workpiece processing position, the weight of said carrying member and a force to be applied to said carrying member are substantially balanced.

36. (Original) A device manufacturing method, comprising the steps of:

preparing an exposure apparatus as recited in any one of Claims 28-35;

applying a resist to a wafer;

exposing the wafer by use of the exposure apparatus; and

developing the exposed wafer.